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ABSTRACT

A study of 310 ninth grade students and their parents in five communities was conducted to look at the relationships between parent-school bonding, student-school bonding, academic achievement, and other variables. Questionnaires were developed for both parents and students asking questions about attachment, commitment, beliefs about school, participation in school events, and communication from the school. Focus groups and telephone interviews provided additional information about family-school relationships. Results indicated: (1) the greater the parents' bonding to school, the greater the student's bonding; (2) student bonding was closely related to academic achievement; and (3) there is no direct relationship between parent-school bonding and students' report of their academic achievement. Overall, the study supported the hypothesis that the greater the parents' bonds of social attachment to their child's school, the greater the student's bonds of attachment. Several limitations were noted. One limitation is the problem of how to measure student success. Another limitation was that different schools were compared (inner city and semi-rural schools, for instance). A third limitation is how parent's socioeconomic status affects their relationship to the school. (KM)

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Family-School Bonding and Student Success

ED 374 369

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Family-School Bonding and Student Success

Abstract

In a study of 310 ninth grade students and parents in five communities, relationships between parent-school bonding, student-school bonding, academic achievement, and other variables were studied. Parent and student questionnaires included items measuring attachment, commitment, beliefs about school, participation in school events and communicaton from the school. Focus groups and telephone interviews provided additional information about family-school relationships.

Testing a model of family school bonding, we found that the greater parents' bonding to school, the greater the student's bonding to school ($p<.01$). Student-school bonding was related to academic achievement ($p<.01$), as reported by both the parent and the student. No direct relationship between parent-school bonding and students' report of their academic achievement was found. Parent-school bonding tends to increase when teachers personally contact parents of students having academic difficulty. Parent-school bonding measures could be useful for evaluation of parent involvement programs. Findings potentially will contribute to social development and social control theories.

Family-School Bonding and Student Success

A majority of educators appear to have accepted research findings which, reviewers declare, incontrovertibly show that when parents are involved in their children's education, those children do better in school and go to better schools (Henderson, 1987; Delgado-Gaitan, 1990). A recent Gallup poll of teachers across America found that the number-one concern of teachers was to get parents more involved with their children's education (Chira, 1993). The term "involvement," however, has been defined in many ways, including things parents do at home to encourage their child's adacemic achievement, school efforts to communicate with parents, and parent participation in the governance of schools (Brandt, 1989). The research reported in this paper was an effort to test the proposition that parent involvement in their child's education is enhanced when accompanied by parents' positive attitudes and beliefs about the school and commitment to help the school fulfill its mission.

Student-school bonding has already been operationally defined and found to be associated with pro-social behavior (Hawkins, Doueck, Lishner, 1988; Hawkins, Lishner, Catalano, & Howard, 1986). It seemed probable that parent-school bonding was related to student-school bonding and that both factors combined--family-school bonding--would have a stronger effect on student outcomes than student-school bonding alone. During the 1992-1993 academic year, a group of investigators operationally defined parent-school bonding and examined how it interacted with other factors to influence students' academic achievement. Scales used previously to measure student-school bonding by investigators at the Seattle Social Development Project were adapted for the survey and parallel items were prepared for a parent questionnaire. A pilot study conducted with ninth grade students, their parents (defined as the adult in the home most responsible for contact with the school), and their teachers in five schools in different communities found support for the expected relationship between parent-school bonding and student-school bonding. High parent-school bonding did not directly correlate with student's academic performance, however. In fact, it appeared that when students have academic difficulty, personal contact from

teachers increases parent's feelings of attachment to the school. Measuring "student success" proved to be difficult as well. Students' self-report of their academic achievement was higher than their parents', but we had not obtained their actual grades as a base for comparison. Areas meriting further research are discussed. Family-school bonding is a desirable factor which schools may find helpful to measure as part of their assessment and evaluation activities.

Definitions of Parent Involvement

Many programs are now underway to increase parental involvement in schools, but strong concern has been expressed about the lack of sound research on these initiatives (Chrispeels, 1991). Parent involvement, in fact, has several dimensions and definitions. Reynolds (1992) examined parents', teachers' and children's ratings of parent involvement in children's education, but found little correspondence between them. Henderson (1988) has stressed that it is necessary to have parent involvement in the school in order for the overall achievement of children in a school to improve.

As part of its school improvement plan, Michigan now requires districts to include the number of parents attending parent-teacher conferences in an Annual Education Report. This is an important indicator of involvement that is easily measured and uses actual behavior, but it is worthwhile to examine other types of involvement and compare their effects to those of conference attendance.

Beyond Involvement--Bonding to School

The concept of social bonding was popularized through John Bowlby's studies of attachments that form between infants and parents (1988, 1969). Building on attachment theory, other social scientists and theoreticians showed how early bonds to parents eventually expand to wider circles of human organization as individuals develop and mature (Tavecchio & Van Ilzendoorn, 1987). When children enter school, they need to endure the

loosening of their ties to their mother figure and establish strong positive bonds with their teachers, in order to be successful.

Studies of delinquency further expanded research and theory about bonding to social groups (Hamm, 1993). Social Development Theory and Social Control Theory (Hawkins & Weis, 1985; Hirschi, 1969) provide a basis for conceptualizing how parent-school bonding plus student-school bonding lead to better academic performance. Building on Hirshci's work, investigators with the Seattle Social Development Project at the University of Washington School of Social Work developed an operational definition of student-school bonding to test the hypothesis that bonding to conventional social groups, such as school and community, protects young people from antisocial deviant behavior and substance abuse. Project leaders described student-school bonding as having four dimensions--attachment, commitment, involvement and belief. Items were developed to measure both attachment and commitment, with five-point Likert scales. Studies using these instruments showed that bonding to conventional groups is negatively correlated with deviance and drug abuse (Hawkins, Lishner, Catalano, & Howard, 1986). Subsequently these findings have been reported in several publications. Suggestions to enhance student's feelings of school membership have been widely disseminated (Arhar, 1992) and programs to increase student-school bonding have been developed (i.e. Arthur & Erickson, 1993; Hawkins, 1992). It is now generally accepted that as children advance through school, bonding to their school-as-a-whole links them to positive adult role models and protects them from deviant behavior and substance abuse (Finn, 1989).

Prior to this research project, parent-school bonding had not been operationally defined and specifically studied, but social scientists, educators and social workers described various aspects of parent-school relations as having a potential influence on student's academic achievement. For example, the School Success Project (Schine & Thomas, 1992), an early-intervention program for breaking the cycle of school dropout, uses

negative parental attitude toward school or school policy as a guideline for referral for intensive intervention services.

Increased communication between parents and educators is seen by Bhaerman (1988) as assisting in the establishment of "solid ground for bonding students more firmly to the schools" (1986, p. 43). He cites literature supporting the importance of almost any form of parent involvement for improving student achievement, and goes on to state,

> Whatever we do to build parents-as-allies relationships, we need to convey respect, provide realistic opportunities for involvement, and try to understand the family's viewpoints.... "Welcome Wagons" of school staff and parents visiting newcomers (are) an important form of "bonding" for adults.... Contracts between teachers and parents have also...been successful in improving academic achievement and strengthening home-school bonds. (pp. 45, 46)

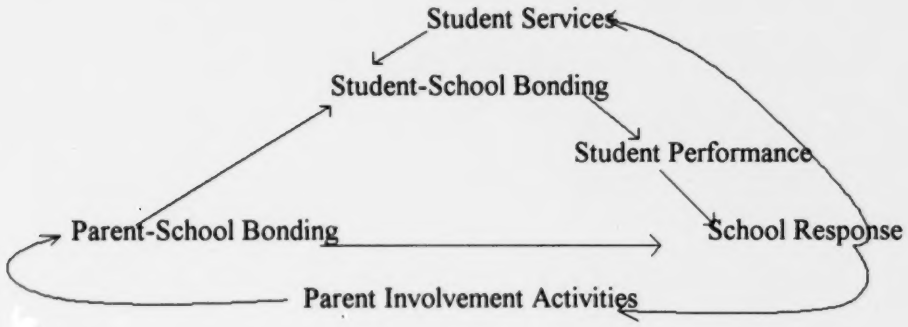
People who have been promoting parent involvement in education often move to the conclusion that what is needed is *family* involvement. Activities and programs which form close ties between the entire family and the school are seen to be critical to successful outcomes (Garlington, 1991). In an analysis of popular models for restructuring schools, Ascher (1993) concludes that the basis of Comer's School Development Program is to heal conflicts and create an ethos that fosters identification and bonding and a community of trust. Clearly, if family-school bonding is viewed as one of the keys to a successful program, then schools need ways to determine if they are on the right track in promoting bonding, and to discover things they can do to increase it.

Family-School Bonding Model

The relationship between parent, student and school is a triadic one and is subject to shifting pairings whenever parties to the relationship are experiencing stress. Compher (1993; 1982) describes three patterns: aggressive entanglement, passive entanglement, and adaptive engagement. In developing a model of the relationship between parent-school

bonding, student-school bonding and student success, it seemed probable that parent-school bonding would affect student-school bonding, which would affect student performance. In turn, the school would respond through the number of services offered for students and the number of parent involvement activities provided for parents. In real life, a spiral effect would be expected, with parent-school bonding increasing the more schools provide services for students and desired activities for parents. For purposes of the research, however, a linear model was developed so that relationships could be tested, as shown below.

Figure 1: Family-School Bonding Model



The following hypothesis was to be tested:

> Independently of ethnicity, parents' education, SES, and family structure, the greater the parents' bonds of social attachment to their child's school, the greater the student's bonds of social attachment to the school will be and the better the student's attendance, social behavior, emotional adjustment and academic performance.

If this hypothesis were supported, we could conclude that family-school bonding, the sum of family members' attachment to and positive beliefs about the school, is an indicator of effective schools.

Method

An opportunity to do a pilot study on family-school relationships arose when a colleague and I received a Department of Education grant to train school personnel to increase parent involvement on behalf of high-risk youth. Six school districts in Michigan were selected to be "Partners" in this project. They were to receive funds to cover the costs of participating in the training, assessing their district's parent-involvement needs, conducting additional inservice training for their staff and planning and implementing innovative parent-involvement plans. Participating schools reflected a variety of communities and social conditions, ranging from an inner-city alternative school to a rural school impacted by an air base closing. Both years of the two-year project, a group of students in a Master of Social Work program were recruited to work with us on research components of the project in exchange for academic credit.

After reviewing literature on measuring parent involvement and social bonding, we concluded that whereas we were studying relationships, we needed to study attitudes and behavior of parents, students, and school personnel. We developed questionnaires to use with all three groups. We took items from instruments developed by Epstein, Connors, and Salinas (1992); Chrispeels, Boruta, and Dougherty (1988); Hoy, Tarter, and Kottkamp, (1991); and the Seattle Social Development Project, and created others ourselves. Ninth-grade students were targeted as subjects because parent involvement for this age aften drops off, and further study seemed important.

Parent Questionnaire

The parent questionnaire was mailed to parents of ninth-grade students in five schools in different districts early in 1993. In two districts, a random sample of 100 ninth-grade students was selected. In three districts, all the parents of the ninth graders in the building were surveyed. The toal number of surveys mailed was 657.

A cover letter, signed by the building principal, accompanied the parent questionnaires. It described the potential benefits of the study to the school, and to students and families in general. The four-page questionnaire took about ten minutes to complete. It had several questions about the family. Parents were asked to indicate the school events they attended, how frequently they attended, how they typically found out about school events, how frequently they were contacted by the school and in what ways. They also were asked about their teen's level of achievement and potential, ranging from "Mostly A's--excellent student" to "Mostly F's--poor student." The number of days their teen had missed school that year, and whether their child received any special help or any punishment or other negative response from the school were solicited. Twenty items on a five-point scale asked for their response to a variety of statements about the school and their involvement with their child's education. Finally they were asked to write one way they could help the school that they were not doing now, and they were asked for any ideas or suggestions they would like to make to improve the ways families and schools help children with their education. (See attached parent questionnaire and the frequencies obtained on each item.)

The parent questionnaires could be folded over, sealed, and returned postage-paid. The initial return rate was 39 percent. The next step was to conduct focus group with parents and have them fill out the survey if they had not already done so. Finally, some parents in each district who did not respond to either the mailed survey or the focus group invitation were interviewed by telephone. A higher number of parents from the inner-city school were interviewed by phone, because of its lower initial response rate. In all, an additional 50 parents were reached in this manner, brining the response rate to 47 percent. The additional

information obtained from the focus groups and phone interviews was useful in answering broader questions about the effectiveness of parent involvement efforts in each school (Pryor, 1994).

Student Questionnaire

The student questionnaire had to be approved by a university Human and Animal Investigation Committee, so there was a two-month delay in administering it. Meanwhile, focus groups with ninth-grade students were held, specifically looking at their views about parent involvement in education (Pryor, 1994). When the two-page questionnaires were finally ready, students who obtained parental consent were excused from class to come to a central area to complete them. Each questionnaire had the students' name attached with a removable note, and was assigned a record number so that it could be combined with the parent's questionnaire to form one record.

Eighteen scaled items designed to measure student-school bonding and attitudes about parent involvement in education were included in the questionnaire. Students were to check the types of help from the community their family could use, and to indicate whether they wanted to be contacted by a school counselor, school social worker, or nurse. They were asked to share any ideas on how the school could help students get a better education and lead healthy, drug-free lives. Students were also asked to indicate their academic achievement and potential, in the same format that the parents had been asked about their teen. A total of 516 student questionnaires were collected. Of these, 301 had parents who had completed a questionnaire, to provide a complete data set.

Results

Reliability and validity

The first step in analyzing the data was to determine the reliability and validity of the items designed to measure parent-school bonding. Factor analysis was done on the Likert-scaled items, and ones which were strongly correlated were selected to form a measure of

parent-school bonding. The following items were averaged to yield a score on the parent-school bonding scale:

I feel welcome at school. (+)

Teachers care more about their jobs than their students. (-)

This school is a good place for students. (+)

Teachers here care about my child. (+)

The school works hard to get parents involved. (+)

School staff ignore my feelings about what is best for my child. (-)

This school cares about me as a parent. (+)

Reliability was analysed, using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, and a standardized item alpha of .9044 was obtained.

Two items which the research group had thought might be indicators of commitment were found to be negatively associated with other bonding items. It was decided that these were not valid indicators of commitment, but instead were tapping "underinvolvement." These were as follows:

I could do more to help this school if I were persuasively asked and encouraged.

I could help my child more if teachers gave me ideas for what to do.

Various items designed to measure student-school bonding were analyzed. Some had been taken verbatim from the Seattle Social Development Project, and others had been modified or paraphrased to suit ninth graders. Separate reliability analyses were done with and without the added items. Using only items from the Seattle Social Development Project, a standardized item alpha of .7140 was obtained. Combining with the additional items, the standardized item alpha is .8240. We therefore chose to use four items taken verbatim from the Seattle Development Project (marked SDP) and five we modified, to measure student-school bonding, as listed below:

This is a very good school.

Most of my teachers are good teachers.

I do extra work on my own in class. (SDP)

I work hard to learn in my classes.

What happens at this school is important to me.

I will seek out teachers for help or just to talk to.

I like my classes this year. (SDP)

When I have an assignment to do, I keep working on it until it is finished. (SDP)

Most mornings I look forward to going to school. (SDP)

We also constructed scores on various types of communication parents reported hahving with the school: off-campus contacts with school staff, receiving bulletins and memos, participating in meetings and conferences at school, and contacts with teacher. We made a scale of perceived school effort to involve students and parents; using four items, a standardized item alpha of .7627 was obtained.

Correlations

When we looked at the correlations between variables, we found a significant correlation ($r = .72$, $p<.01$) between parent-school bonding and perceived involvement effort,[1] using a one-tailed test. We also found parent-school bonding correlated negatively with underinvolvement ($r = -.29$, $p<.01$) and positively with the frequency with which bulletins and memos from the school were received ($r = .29$, $p<.01$); teacher contacts ($r = .26$, $p<.01$) and student-school bonding ($r = .26$. $p<.10$). Student-school bonding was found to be correlated with a positive student attitude about parents being involved in their children's education ($r = .52$). It also correlated positively with requests to be contacted about services they or their family could use ($r = .18$, $p <.01$) by a school counselor (13% of students), school social worker (4% of students), or helping person from the community (7% of students).

The correlation between parent-school bonding and parent's report of their child's average grade in school that year was weak ($r = .11$, $p<.05$), and there was no significant correlation between parent-school bonding and their teen's reported average grade in school. Student-school bonding, however, was correlated with the parent's reported grade point

average (GPA) ($r = .18$, $p<.01$) and the student's self-reported GPA ($r = .29$, $p<.01$). Although there was a strong correlation between the parent's reported GPA and the teen's reported GPA ($r = .64$, $p<.01$), there were more cases in which students reported their grades higher than the parents rather than vice versa, as shown in Table 1. Interestingly, cases in which parents' estimates of their teen's potential exceeded their teens' estimate of their own ability equalled the number of cases in which parents and teens agreed, as Table 1 also shows.

Insert Table 1 about here

Inter-item correlations were inspected and a chart was made showing the interrelationships among variables, according to the initial model. (See Chart 1.) The parent's perception of the school's parent and student involvement effort had a positive effect on both parent-school bonding ($r = .72$. $p<.01$) and student-school bonding ($r = .23$, $p<.01$). Various types of communication from the school affected parent-school bonding but not student-school bonding. The closest association among the various types of communication and parent-school bonding was through the use of bulletins and memos ($r = .29$), followed by personal teacher contacts ($r = .26$).

Insert Chart 1 about here

An interesting finding was that there was a negative relationship between personal contacts from the teacher and parent-reported GPA ($r = -.25$) and student-reported GPA ($r = -.28$). When students are having academic difficulty, teachers are more likely to call the parents and send notes home. This personal effort to reach out to parents and communicate directly about a child's academic performance can create stronger feelings of attachment to the school and beliefs that a good school is good. It gives the parents the message that the teachers really care about their child. Further research is needed to determine if the training

teachers in these schools receive about how to communicate effectively with parents makes a difference in the quality of the contacts, and whether the quality of the communication, not just the quantity, creates greater bonding.

Cross-District Comparisons

One-way analysis of variance was conducted to compare the five participating schools on parent and student characteristics. Statistically significant differences were found. In particular, the inner-city alternative school, which has an all-male student body, and is over 90 percent African American, stood out as having high levels of parent-school bonding and student-school bonding. Comparisons of the districts are shown in Tables 2, 3, and 4. The inner-city alternative school stands out as different on a number of characteristics, including a higher number of student absences and lower family income. Interestingly, there is a much higher report of finding out about school events by personal teacher contact in the inner-city school. This school has a policy of calling parents whenever a student is absent. Parents also sign contracts with the school agreeing to maintain communication with school staff and to participate in parent-teacher conferences and school meetings (Favorini, 1994). Although students at this school have the highest rate of absenteeism and the lowest achievement and potential, they scored highest on both student-school bonding and parent-school bonding. The unique features of this school raise some very interesting issues about the link between parent-school bonding and student success, which will be discussed later.

Insert Tables 2, 3, and 4 about here

Testing of hypotheses

Regression analysis was used to examine various factors which might contribute to parent-school bonding: parent's ethnicity, parent's own liking for ninth grade, parent's education, family income, attendance at meetings and conferences, teacher contact, bulletins and memos, off-campus school meetings, and perceived congruence between parent and

school goals for the student. Using SPSS stepwise regression, significant t tests were found for congruence of goals[2] (6.96, p=.000), receiving bulletins and memos (4.94, p-.000), personal contact from teachers (3.03, p=.003), and parent's race (2.19, p=.030). Other variables examined were not significant. (Using the enter method for regression, the first three variables in the equation remained the same, but parent's race was not significant.)

Regression analysis was also done for effects of parent's race, education, employment, family structure (number of adults and number of children in the home), parent-school bonding and income on student-school bonding. Using the stepwise method, parent-school bonding was found to the most important variable in the equation, with a t of 3.53, p=.001. Number of children in the home also had a positive effect on student-school bonding (t=2.07, p=.040). Parent's education received a t of 2.04, p=.043. Other t scores were not significant. (Similar results were found using the enter method.)

How to measure student "success" was problematic, as we had only parent and student reports of academic achievement, potential, and liking for ninth grade to go on. We therefore looked at both parent's reported academic performance and the teen's reported academic performance as outcome variables. Due to missing data, the number of cases analyzed dropped to 155.

Looking at variables affecting parents' report of their child's academic performance, a t of 2.89 (p=.004) was found for student-school bonding; a t 2.42 (p=.013) was found for family income, using the stepwise method. None of the other variables examined--parent's education, ethnicity, number of adults in home, number of children in home, parent bonding, or parent employment outside the home--had significant t's.

Looking at variables affecting teens' report of their own academic performance, a t of -3.38, p=.001 was found for parent's race, using the stepwise method. (Non-white students reported lower GPAs than white students.) Other variables significantly related to teen's reported GPA were student-school bonding (3.61; p=.000), and parents' employment outside the home (2.78; p=.006). There is a positive linear relationship between parents' employment

outside the home--part time and full time--and students' academic achievement. (This relationship was also found in a study by Clark, 1983).

Discussion

This study did support the hypothesis that independently of parent's race, parent's education, family income and family structure, the greater the parent's bonds of social attachment to their child's school are, the greater the student's bonds of attachment will be. Although a positive Pearson r was found between parent-school bonding and parent's report of their student's academic performance, this relationship was not significant in the regression analysis, when many cases were eliminated due to missing data. (The number of cases used in the multiple regression correlation matrix was 156.)

One of the biggest problems encountered in this study is how to measure student success. At one level the problem was just whose report of the average academic performance to believe. In future research on this topic, the actual GPA should be obtained and compared to the parent and student reports.

At a much deeper level, one has to question, what is "success" in educational terms anyway? Perhaps we should look at achievement according to whether a student performs up to or above potential. In measuring the success of Comer's School Development Program, success was not just in achievement scores received, but differences in the scores over what they had been (Comer, 1980). Perhaps we have to consider the odds working against a student and the accomplishments made despite these odds. Improvement in scores, even improvement from fall to spring term, may be a better way to measure the success for at-risk students, who are not likely to have higher GPAs for awhile (Nancy Chavkin, Southwest Texas State University, personal communication, March 1994). Perhaps we should engage the students themselves--the stakeholders in the process-- in setting the criteria for success.

This study was limited in that the schools compared were different types of schools. Although the differences found were interesting. more conclusively determining the effects of

parent-school bonding on student performance would require comparison of schools matched for similar characteristic, or a time series study of one or more schools.

Another issue is how parent's socio-economic status affects their relationship to the school. Generally it has been thought that parents whose socio-economic status and education are lower than school personnel have more difficulty getting involved with the school because of cultural barriers, feelings of mistrust, and threat to feelings of adequacy. The high bonding achieved in the inner-city alternative school shows that this need not be the case. In low-income communities, economic circumstances make it more difficult for parents to afford the time to participate with the school. This school recognized that and paid parents a stipend for attending support group meetings and helping out in the school (thanks to grants from the U.S. Department of Education and the Skillman Foundation). The welcoming atmosphere, the recognition of parent's pain and problems, and the communications from teachers that they really cared about the students and shared the parents' goals for their child made a difference in how parents felt.

Another possible explanation for the high degree of bonding in the inner-city school comes from attachment theory. Attachment is described in the literature as a psychological bond to the figure seen as having resources necessary to survival, who plays the part of a secure base and haven (Bowlby, 1988). "(A)ttachment behavior...can be observed throughout the life cycle, especially in stressful situations" (Bretherton & Waters, 1985, p. 6). Perhaps the stress of the inner-city environment, particularly intense among parents whose children had been unsuccessful in regular school programs, leads to stronger family bonding to teachers and school.

In the semi-rural mobile district, automobile workers were distrustful and resentful toward teachers who drove foreign cars and did not share their values. School staff there are seeking ways to overcome this situation. Reportedly, in some upper-middle class school districts, parent-school relationships are problematic when parents consider themselves to be better educated, wealthier, and more powerful than most teachers. Teachers will feel

threatened in this situation, but strategies to improve family-school relations should be able to have a positive effect.

Although the effects of parent-school bonding on school and student outcomes need further clarification, the scale developed in this project appears to be valid, reliable and useful. It is more difficult to use than simply counting parents who attend meetings and conferences, and counting the contacts teachers have with parents. However, since parents' attendance at meetings and conferences showed no correlation with the students' self-reported grades or parent-school bonding, it is important to continue to study this dimension of parent-school relationships.

Conclusions

Parent-school bonding, as measured in this study, does show some interesting relationships with school characteristics. Although it does not directly affect students' academic performance as measured in this study, it is related to students' feelings of attachment and commitment to their school. It also is affected by activities that teachers and school personnel do to communicate with parents about their child's education.

Future research on this topic should

- Involve teachers, youth and parents in defining how they would measure student success;
- Develop a subscale of parent's commitment to supporting the educational efforts of the school;
- Examine parent-school bonding for students at different grade levels;
- Examine how parent-school bonding changes for parents over time, using a longitudinal design;
- Obtain actual GPAs for students, compare to self and parent report, and analyze differences between parents and students whose reports agree or disagree;
- Look at the combined effect of parent and student relationships to the school;

- Examine student academic improvement when schools increase their efforts to involve parents (i.e., formulating a policy on parent involvement, training teachers to involve parents).

If educators can see the importance of parents' beliefs about the school, their attachment and commitment, they can plan activities specifically designed to increase these factors. They will also need instruments to determine how well they are achieving their goals. The scale of parent-school bonding could be a useful part of a school needs assessment. If it were also administered after a program to involve parents was implemented, as part of the evaluation, interesting results could be obtained. The scale of parent-school bonding draws upon previous instruments and is similar to others, such as the Parent Attitude Toward School Effectiveness (PATSE) questionnaire (Melnick & Fiene, 1990). Therefore, it could easily be used in combination with other instruments. Its particular merit is that it helps integrate knowledge of family-school connections into theories of social development and social control, thereby broadening the scope and utility of these theories. The more our research tools enable us to look at family systems in relationship to schools, the better we will be able to understand the complex realities that intertwine to determine student success.

NOTES

[1]This was computed by taking the mean score on the following items from the parent questionnaire: 5) The school includes my teen in parent-teacher conferences. 6) The school assigns school work that requires my teen to share ideas and talk with me. 7) The school provides me with information about what my child is studying. 16) The school helps parents and their students.

[2]Congruence of goals was measured by reverse scoring on item 1) The school and I have different goals for my child.

Table 1. Crosstabulation of Parent and Teen Reports: GPA, Ability, and Potential

Parent-reported GPA (down) Student-report GPA (across)

Count Total Percent	Mostly F's Poor	Mostly D's Fair	Mostly C's Average	Mostly B's Above ave.	Mostly A's Excellent	Row Total
Mostly F's Poor	1 0.5	1 0.5				2 1.1
Mostly D's Fair		5 2.7	3 1.6	4 2.2	1 0.5	13 7.1
Mostly C's Average		6 3.3	41 22.3	16 8.7	5 2.7	68 37.0
Mostly B's Above ave.		2 1.1	9 4.9	45 24.5	9 4.8	65 35.3
Mostly A's Excellent			1 0.5	2 1.1	33 17.9	36 19.6
Column Total	1 0.5	14 7.6	54 29.3	67 36.4	48 26.1	184 100.0

Student report higher than parents = 39; Reports same = 125; Parent report higher than students = 20.

Parent-reported Potential (down) Student-reported Ability (across)

Count Total Percent	Mostly F's Poor	Mostly D's Fair	Mostly C's Average	Mostly B's Above ave.	Mostly A's Excellent	Row Total
Mostly D's Fair	1 .6	3 1.7	6 3.3	1 .6		11 6.1
Mostly C's Average	2 1.1	4 2.2	28 15.6	4 2.2	4 2.2	42 23.3
Mostly B's Above ave.	1 .6	4 2.2	28 15.6	31 17.2	9 5.0	73 40.6
Mostly A's Excellent	1 .6		9 5.0	27 15.0	17 9.4	54 30.0
Column Total	5 2.8	11 6.1	71 39.4	63 35.0	30 16.7	180 100.0

Student report higher than parent = 22; Reports same=79; Parent report higher than student = 79.

Table 2. Comparative Family Characteristics by School District

Characteristics:	Inner-city Alternative		Rural Central		Rural-- Air Base Loss		Semi-rural/ Mobile		Industrial City	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Adults in home	1.93	1.24	1.98	0.66	1.93	0.38	1.98	0.60	2.07	0.78
Children in home	3.44	1.97	2.17	0.96	2.22	0.96	2.57	1.33	2.69	1.66
Employed full time outside home	64.7 %		18.6 %		33.3 %		33.3 %		42.0 %	
Parent education (2= high school diploma)	2.65	1.31	3.13	.65	2.93	1.36	2.78	1.21	2.86	1.31
Annual income (median)	less than $10,000		$40,000 - $49,999		$20,000 - $29,999		$40,000 - $49,999		$20,000 - $29,999	
Non-white	94.1 %		1.7 %		9.3 %		12.9 %		31.5 %	
Number of respondents/ Number of surveys sent	34/97		60/100		55/100		64/140		90/220	

Table 3. Parent Characteristics by School District

	Inner-city Alternative		Rural Central		Rural-- Air Base Loss		Semi-rural/ Mobile		Industrial City		F Ratio
Characteristics:	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Participation in meetings and conferences	1.71	1.64`	2.22	1.33	.98	1.06	2.53	2.13	2.66	1.88	9.51**
Parent-School Bonding (1=low; 5=high)	4.54	.52	3.53	.81	3.56	.89	3.46	.88	3.59	1.00	9.82**
Congruence of parent and school goals	4.22	1.18	3.63	1.16	3.57	1.19	3.45	1.29	3.63	1.48	1.96
Own liking for 9th grade (5=a lot; 1=not at all)	4.38	1.16	4.07	1.06	3.99	1.20	4.21	.99	4.28	1.04	1.11
Conference attendance	1.71	1.64	2.22	1.33	0.98	1.06	2.53	1.88	2.66	1.88	9.51**
Contact from teacher	4.25	1.92	1.77	1.90	1.61	1.66	1.64	1.96	1.67	1.96	13.15**
Number of respondents/ Number of surveys sent	34/97		60/100		55/100		64/140		90/220		Total: 303/657

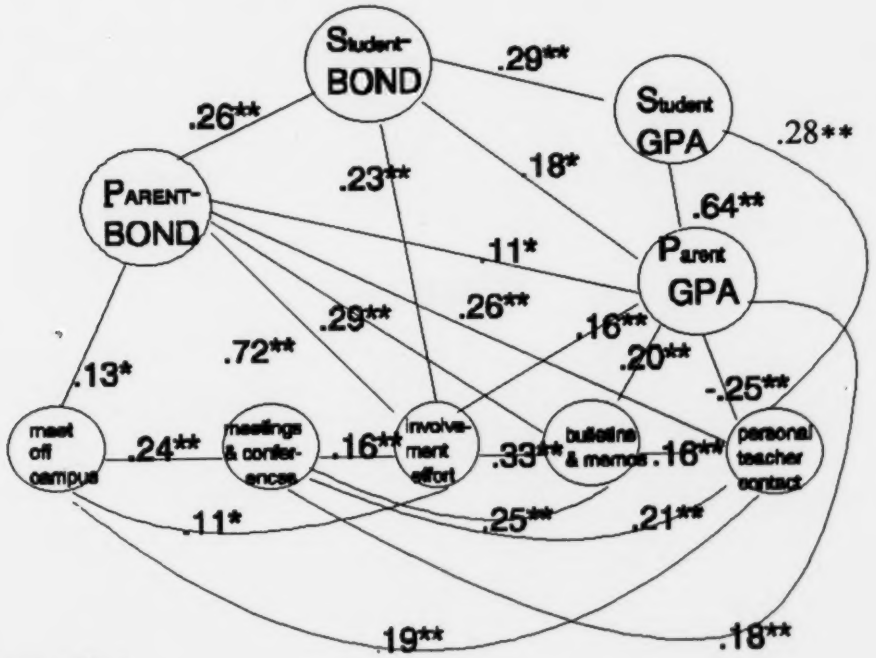
*p<.05, **p<.01 one tailed

Table 4. Student Characteristics by School District

Characteristics:	Inner-city Alternative	Rural Central	Rural-- Air Base Loss	Semi-rural-- Mobile	Industrial City	F Ratio
Received punishment	15.2 %	30.0 %	27.8 %	29.7 %	24.0 %	
Received special service	29.4 %	20.3 %	30.9 %	23.4 %	30.3 %	
% with problem	41.2 %	31.7 %	32.7 %	34.4 %	41.1 %	
	M SD	M SD	M SD	M SD	M SD	
Age	15.8 0.98	14.85 0.76	14.69 0.69	14.43 0.56	14.7 0.67	
Self-report GPA (1=low; 5=high)	3.61 0.76	3.88 0.83	3.46 1.15	3.41 0.92	3.72 0.91	3.20*
Potential (1=low; 5=high)	3.33 1.05	3.92 0.95	3.93 0.84	3.99 0.94	3.98 0.91	3.27 *
Days absent	7.90 8.31	4.14 5.07	4.14 4.20	4.45 5.66	4.50 5.90	2.67 *
Bonding (1=low; 5=high)	3.73 0.63	3.05 0.71	3.36 0.65	3.35 0.58	3.25 0.80	5.54**
Total requests for referral	.48 .57	.13 .34	.21 .45	.28 .67	.26 .52	2.80*
Number of respondents	34	76	68	67	163	Total: 408

*p<.05, **p<.01 one tailed

Chart 1. Correlations Between Parent-School Bonding and Other Variables



* p.<.05 one tailed
** p.<.01 one tailed

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